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## State budget completed without new fees or tax increases

*Legislature sticks to its commitment to have government live within its means*

**LANSING** – The state Senate has completed its work on the fiscal year 2005-06 budget, approving spending plans that are balanced without the need for increased fees and taxes.

“I’m proud to say we kept our commitment to areas such as education and agriculture during this tough budget process and did not ask residents to pay more for the programs,” said Sen. Jud Gilbert, R-Algonac. “We made some difficult decisions, but we did not lose sight of our priorities to keep people safe, healthy and happy.”

Throughout the budget process, Senate Republicans focused on the priorities set forth by their constituents to ensure Michigan remains an economically viable state that is a great place to live, work and raise a family.

“We made a commitment to taxpayers that we would force government to live within its means, just as Michigan’s families have to,” said Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema, R-Wyoming. “The first question we answered was how much money we had available. Then we had to determine Michigan’s priorities and focus our limited resources without turning to taxpayers for more money.”

Among the positive highlights of next year’s budget, Senate Republicans:

- Increased funding for K-12 public schools by \$175 per pupil.
- Increased funding for special education programs.
- Increased funding for school lunch programs.
- Restored funding for school bus safety inspection.
- Provided a funding floor of \$3,650 per student for public universities.
- Restored funding for scholarships, including the Michigan Tuition Grants and King-Chavez-Parks programs.
- Protected the Michigan Merit Award program from the governor’s proposed changes.
- Restored funding to the Agriculture Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service.

- Restored \$1.3 million for fuel inspections and the hiring of additional inspectors to ensure customers are receiving the proper quantity and quality of fuel they paid for.
- Restored funding for hearing and vision screening services for Medicaid recipients.
- Required Medicaid recipients to sign a personal health responsibility agreement.
- Established a bipartisan joint committee to identify ways to reduce Medicaid costs.
- Required lights on all construction barrels to ensure the safety of motorists.
- Required the coordination of routes served by suburban and urban transit authorities to prevent wasteful spending of limited transportation dollars.
- Placed restrictions on state employees' out-of-state travel.
- Required the Department of Management and Budget to develop a plan for more effective assignment and authorized use of state vehicles.

The budgets are expected to be signed by the governor prior to the start of the new fiscal year, which starts Oct. 1.

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